



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: October 24, 1997 (97-38)
Contact: Linda Waring (360) 902-1815

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560
<http://www.wa.gov/agr/>

Growth in organic food market prompts fee increase

OLYMPIA — A 10 percent fee increase is proposed to cover the cost of regulating one of the fastest growing agricultural industries in the state. The organic food industry has grown 20 to 30 percent each year since 1993. Public comment on the proposed increase will be heard at 10 a.m. Nov. 5, in Room 259 of the Natural Resources Building, 1111 Jefferson St., Olympia.

“Organic food sells for 20 to 100 percent more than conventional food. It is very lucrative. The market has grown tremendously, especially in King, Thurston and Whatcom counties,” said Miles McEvoy, organic program manager at Department of Agriculture.

Sales of Washington organic foods are expected to exceed \$40 million this year.

“The growth in the market for organic food and the higher prices are great incentives for fraud and mislabeling. Our role is to ensure consumers get what they’re paying for,” McEvoy said. “Currently, we don’t have adequate resources to keep up with growth in the industry.”

Department of Agriculture protects consumers by ensuring organic crops are grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Instead, organic farmers use natural fertilizers and biological control to produce crops.

The fee for a farm with annual sales of less than \$12,000 would increase from \$150 to \$165. For high end producers with sales greater than \$750,000 fees increase proportionally at \$2,200 plus one-tenth of one percent on gross organic sales.

For more information, or a copy of the proposed rules, contact Miles McEvoy at (360) 902-1924, FAX (360) 902-2087, or e-mail: mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov. Written testimony will be accepted until 5 p.m., Nov. 5, 1997. Send comments to Department of Agriculture, Organic Food Program, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560

###